

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE **MEDALLION**



WINTER 2017



**WIDE-OPEN SPACES  
AND BOLD HERITAGE**

Panhandle's Historic Courthouses Reflect  
Region's Colorful Character



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

John L. Nau, III, Chairman  
John W. Crain, Vice Chairman  
Robert K. Shepard, Secretary

Earl Broussard, Jr.  
Monica Burdette  
Thomas M. Hatfield  
Wallace B. Jefferson  
Tom Perini  
Gilbert E. "Pete" Peterson  
Judy C. Richardson  
Daisy Sloan White

Executive Director: Mark Wolfe

Medallion Staff:

Chris Florance  
Division Director  
Andy Rhodes  
Managing Editor  
Judy Jensen  
Senior Graphic Design Coordinator

ISSN 0890-7595

Vol. 55, No. 1

thc.texas.gov thc@thc.texas.gov

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE MEDALLION

WINTER 2017

THC OUTREACH

4 Maintaining History  
Courthouse Upkeep  
Requires Successful  
Planning, Partnerships.

10 Squared Away  
Town Square Initiative  
Combines Successful  
THC Programs.



FEATURE

6 Bold Heritage  
Panhandle's Historic  
Courthouses Reflect  
Region's Colorful Character.



ON THE COVER: The Donley County Courthouse in Clarendon. Photo: Andy Rhodes.

VISIT US ON THE WEB

thc.texas.gov

Learn more about the real places  
telling the real stories of Texas.

texastimetravel.com

The Texas Heritage Trails Program's  
travel resource

texashistoricsites.com

The THC's 21 state historic properties

thcfriends.org

Friends of the Texas Historical Commission



FAST FACTS

Since its inception in 1999, the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program has significantly contributed to state and local economies.



IN COUNTY-MATCHING CONSTRUCTION DOLLARS



IN TOTAL STATE GDP



JOBS SUPPORTED

## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

*real places telling real stories*



Some of the most impactful projects at the Texas Historical Commission involve the preservation of the Lone Star State's historic county courthouses.

County courthouses—the anchors of town squares across the state—have long been a gathering place for Texas communities. Many courthouses trace their roots to a time when growing areas proudly constructed these magnificent structures as symbols of prosperity and progress.

In Texas' early days, designating a county seat was considered a measure of prestige. Town founders often donated land in prominent locations in the community center to best serve its citizens. As the primary destinations for business and commerce, courthouses were essential to the economic expansion of many Texas communities. To this day, they serve vital roles as gathering places for festivals and as destinations for heritage travelers.

Most courthouse squares play host to unique festivals and celebrations. From military ceremonies to musical performances to food festivals, courthouse lawns are essential gathering places with historic courthouses as picturesque backdrops.

Many of these structures remain vital due to their involvement with the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. There are more than 240 buildings eligible for the program statewide. To date, we've funded 67 full restorations. We have awarded 93 preservation grants, and there are 74 counties that need state funding for work at their courthouses. These structures have enormous potential for our economy, especially as magnets for heritage tourists.

Tourism in the state is a \$69 billion annual industry, with visitor spending directly supporting 653,000 jobs in 2015 and generating \$6.2 billion in state and local taxes. Our historic courthouses are a draw for heritage tourists, who account for 10 percent of travelers in our state. These travelers spend nearly \$175 per day on average—more than the typical tourist—amounting to \$2.26 billion in annual visitor spending in Texas.

It's heartening to keep in mind that many of these historic courthouses are the same structures our predecessors built so many years ago. These landmarks embody the spirit of the Lone Star State, representing decades of celebrations, elections, marriages, and most of all, freedom and democracy for Texans.

With the Texas flag proudly waving above them, our courthouses have endured the test of time and must continue to remain as strong as our state.

Sincerely,

John L. Nau, III  
Chair, Texas Historical Commission



GREG ABBOTT, GOVERNOR • JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIR • MARK WOLFE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TEXAS • 78711-2276 • P 512-463-6100 • F 512-475-4872 • [thc.texas.gov](http://thc.texas.gov)

# Maintaining History

## Successful Courthouse Upkeep Requires Planning, Partnerships, Commitment

By *Andy Rhodes*  
*Managing Editor, The Medallion*

Maintaining a historic courthouse can be similar to household upkeep.

But instead of scheduling a new paint job for the front porch and window frames, there may be a clock tower or turret to consider. Homeowners might replace a hot water heater after 20 years, while courthouses may need a new ground-source heat pump.

The point being, if you're aware of the cyclical needs of your structure's components and systems, you can extend its longevity while preventing costly replacements and repairs.

Similarly, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) realized the need to create a separate maintenance-related program to complement its Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP). The THC developed the Texas Courthouse Stewardship Program in 2005 to prevent the newly restored state landmarks from returning to a state of decay or deterioration.

With 63 courthouses fully restored, the THCPP has played a significant role ensuring that the restored structures and the records they protect are sustainable for generations to come.

"These buildings need to be cared for after the restoration to prevent them from falling back into disrepair," says THCPP Director Sharon Fleming. "It's important to remember—for any building—stewardship is an ongoing effort."

As part of the stewardship program, THC staff architects help counties address issues by offering professional advice on how to best preserve the

building. Useful information is also available on the program's web page ([thc.texas.gov/tcsp](http://thc.texas.gov/tcsp)). These valuable tools allow county staff to plan in advance for budgeting and construction projects.

The THC's courthouse architectural staff can also assist counties with

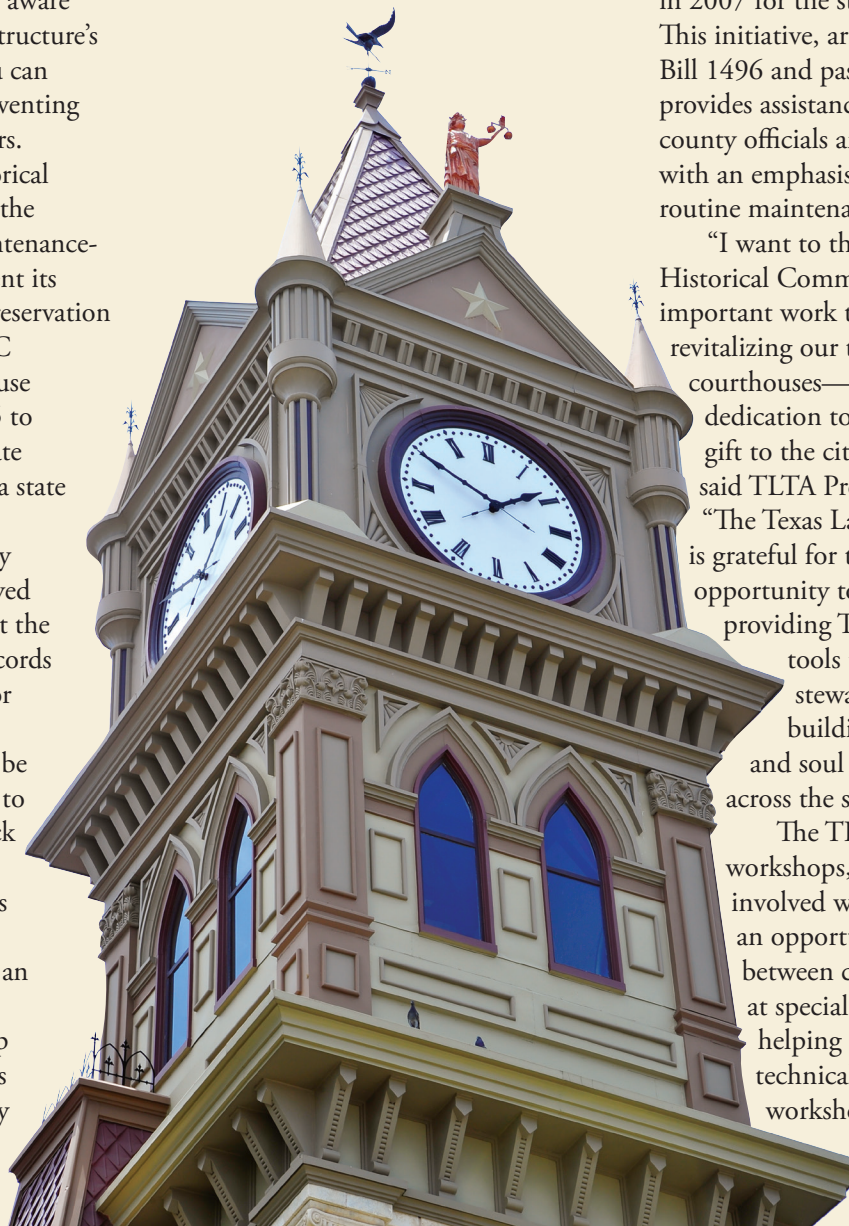
The Bosque County Courthouse has benefitted from the Courthouse Stewardship Program.

developing a cyclical maintenance plan for immediate and long-term care of their historic buildings and sites.

This assistance has been bolstered by important statewide partnerships. The THC and the Texas Land Title Association (TLTA), a statewide member-based trade organization for title agents, developed a workshop series in 2007 for the stewardship program. This initiative, arising from Senate Bill 1496 and passed into law in 2005, provides assistance and training for county officials and facilities managers with an emphasis on a commitment to routine maintenance programs.

"I want to thank the Texas Historical Commission for the important work they've done in revitalizing our treasured Texas courthouses—their passion and dedication to this project is a true gift to the citizens of our state," said TLTA President James Dudley. "The Texas Land Title Association is grateful for the continued opportunity to partner with them in providing Texas counties with the tools they need to be good stewards of these beautiful buildings that are the heart and soul of our communities across the state."

The TLTA-sponsored workshops, available for counties involved with the THCPP, offer an opportunity for dialogue between county representatives at specialized sessions, often helping to solve similar technical issues. Previous workshop session titles include Courthouse Security, Keeping Doors





By participating in the Texas Courthouse Stewardship program, San Augustine County officials and employees can seek free professional advice from the THC's preservation architects.

and Windows in Shape, and Making Time for Preventive Maintenance While Putting Out Everyday Fires. Workshop attendees typically include a facility manager and an elected official; as funding allows, hotel and travel costs may be reimbursed for up to two participants per county.

So far, the THC-TLTA partnership has resulted in a dozen workshops representing over 140 training hours to more than 500 attendees, including four regional workshops throughout the state in 2015 and 2016.

“From the beginning of this project, we felt our mutual affinity for these wonderful buildings could lead to a collaboration that would benefit the people of Texas,” said TLTA Executive Vice President and CEO Leslie Midgely. “Our continued commitment to this important project is an additional way for our industry to assist the counties we serve throughout the state of Texas.”

In recognition of its important contributions to courthouse preserva-

“The Texas Land Title Association’s tireless support for the preservation and conservation of Texas’ historic courthouses benefits all Texans, both culturally and economically.”

—Mark Wolfe

Executive Director, Texas Historical Commission

tion, the TLTA received the THC’s 2015 Governor’s Award for Historic Preservation.

“The Texas Land Title Association’s tireless support for the preservation and conservation of Texas’ historic courthouses benefits all Texans, both culturally and economically,” said THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe at the October 2016 ceremony. “When we preserve our courthouses and other precious state historic resources, we generate significant economic benefit to our state and residents.”

In 2008, the THC introduced the Texas Courthouse Stewardship Awards to recognize counties that have established exemplary stewardship practices to maintain their courthouses in restored condition. The TLTA has sponsored this award since the program originated.

Potter County received last year’s award, thanks in part to the dedicated efforts of Mike Head, the county’s facilities manager. Head

has worked in the county courthouse for several decades, and his passion for the structure played a key role in its successful restoration and ongoing maintenance.

“I’ve been working here 33 years, so I know this place pretty well by now,” he said. “It’s a beautiful old building, and I really enjoy having the opportunity to make sure it stays that way.” ★

For more information about the THC’s courthouse program, visit [thc.texas.gov/thcapp](http://thc.texas.gov/thcapp). To learn more about the TLTA, visit [tlta.com](http://tlta.com).



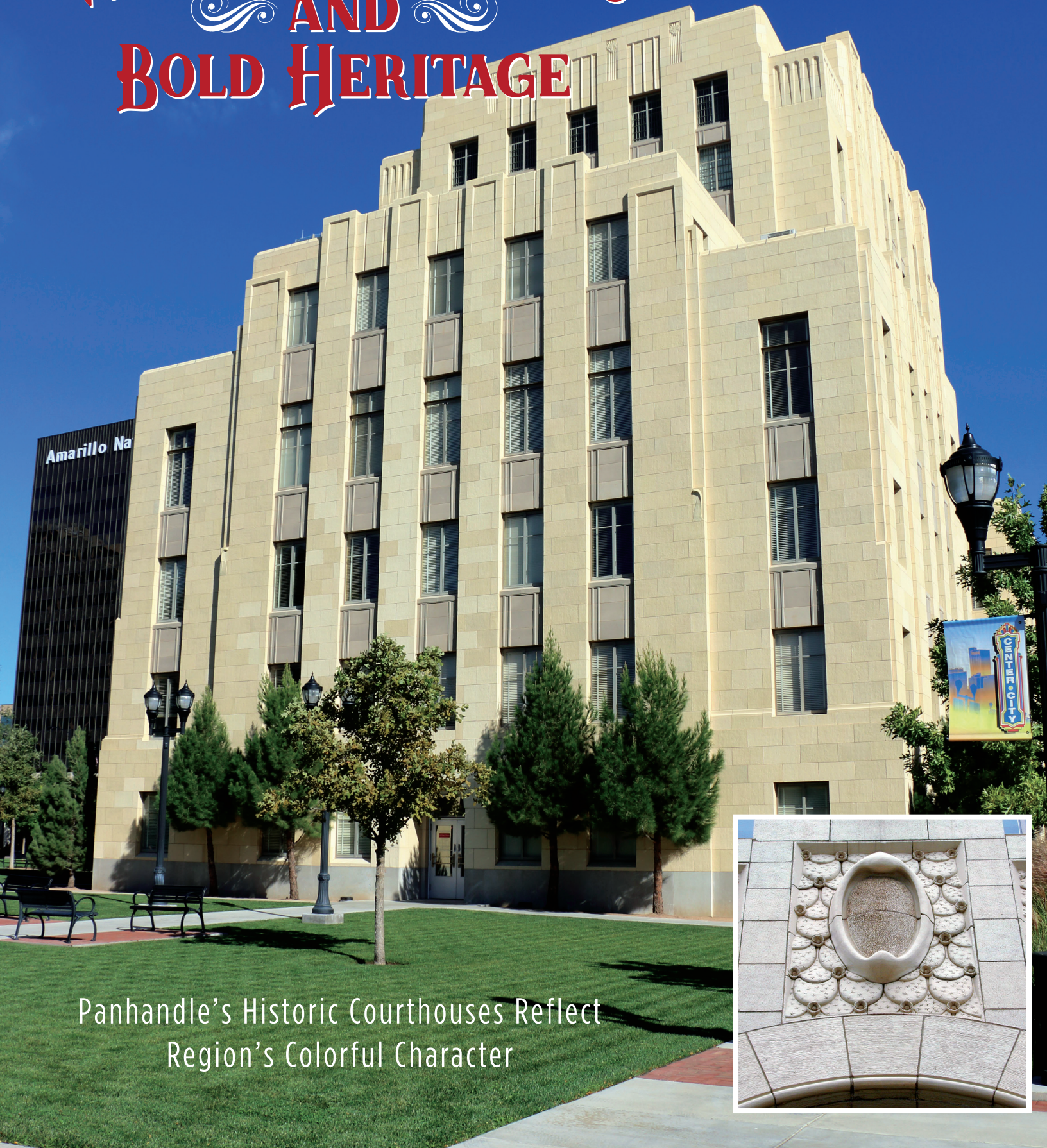
All photos by Wayne Wendel.

The Erath County Courthouse in Stephenville has received assistance from THC Stewardship Program staff about developing a cyclical maintenance plan and preservation checklists.

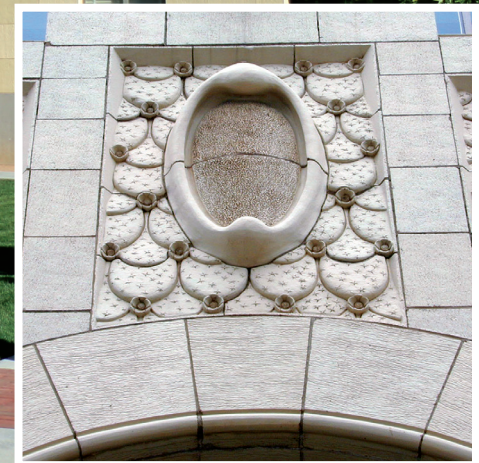
Text and photos by Andy Rhodes, *The Medallion* Managing Editor



# WIDE-OPEN SPACES AND BOLD HERITAGE



Panhandle's Historic Courthouses Reflect  
Region's Colorful Character



Travelers don't always associate a Texas getaway with the Panhandle area. But they should. Beyond natural and cultural wonders like Palo Duro Canyon and Route 66, the region boasts a collection of restored historic courthouses unmatched across the state. From an asymmetrical Romanesque Revival structure to a Beaux Arts beauty to a Pueblo Deco courthouse, these buildings aptly represent the unique spirit of the Texas Panhandle.

The busiest and most-visited of the bunch is the Potter County Courthouse in downtown Amarillo. Completed in 1932, the eight-story structure is an architectural focal point, and is referred to as "Pueblo Deco" style—combining geometric ornamentation and design features from the Art Deco and Pueblo Revival movements in the Southwest.

The building received a complete restoration in 2012 thanks to assistance from the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP). The program also provided valuable preservation guidance after a January 2017 flood caused damage to the courthouse.

Potter County Facilities Director Mike Head was instrumental in the original restoration process, offering valuable insight about all facets of the historic building. As he surveys the exterior walls, Head mentions some of his favorite elements of the unique Pueblo Deco structure. A bas relief design on the façade depicts prickly pear cactus pads and includes an uncommon cartouche feature (an oval-shaped object associated with ancient Egyptian design). He also notes the elongated longhorn over one of the entrances, adding that it was included to honor regional ranching icon Charles Goodnight.



"At night we have dramatic lighting on these walls, and that makes the courthouse shine like a beacon—it has a real temple of justice appearance," he proudly explains.

Opposite: The 1932 Potter County Courthouse features a unique Pueblo Deco style, depicted in the prickly pear cactus design, inset. Left: Potter County Facilities Director Mike Head.

Inside, Head points to the elevator, where a collection of ranching brands adorn the doors. They represent dozens of cattle ranches, mostly in Potter County.

Other interior highlights include the main courtroom, with its original floor tile, aluminum-colored trim, and vertical design elements to maximize the Art Deco aesthetic. For the restoration, Potter County worked with the Austin-based firm Architexas, which primarily used local contractors to help remove unsightly



The Potter County Courthouse restoration enhanced the building's original Art Deco-inspired architectural details, seen in this light fixture and stairwell.

dropped ceilings and an outdated fire slide. The impressive results garnered accolades and recognition from local and statewide organizations, including a recent THC architectural stewardship award for maintaining the building's restored condition.

Head is proud of the work he and his colleagues contributed to the restoration, specifically recalling a minor event from three decades ago that ultimately played a significant role in the project's success.

"In 1985, I was taking a file cabinet to auction when I realized something was still rolling around inside there making noise," Head says. "So, I looked in there and found it was the original blueprint designs for the building. I held on to those for a long time—they came in mighty handy when we did the restoration."

The courthouse is among many heritage attractions in Amarillo, where travelers discover a fascinating blend of proud agricultural heritage with unexpected flair adorning historic buildings in the downtown area. Maintaining this notable sense of place is a primary goal of Center City of Amarillo, the 25-year-old nonprofit organization that serves as the local Main Street Program. Beth Duke, Center City's executive director, takes pride in local efforts to protect history.

"Potter County is a leader in historic preservation," she says. "Saving our Santa Fe Building (in 2000) was a big part of downtown's revitalization. It led to the push to restore the courthouse."

Duke adds that this support for local history is on full display during High Noon on the Square, an annual free concert series held on the courthouse lawn each Wednesday during the summer. The series is in its 22nd year, and averages 500 attendees each week.

Another historical attraction in Amarillo is **Old Route 66** ([amarillo66.com](http://amarillo66.com)). A half-mile stretch of 6th Avenue just west of downtown contains an impressive collection of 1930s-era buildings, including cafes, service stations, and

motor lodges now housing restaurants and antique shops. Notable destinations are the 1946 **Golden Light Café and Cantina** ([goldenlightcafe.com](http://goldenlightcafe.com), 806-374-9237) featuring



The Cadillac Ranch art installation west of Amarillo features 10 historic Cadillacs in a field.

tasty burgers and live music on weekends, and the venerable **Sixth Street Antique Mall** ([6thstreetantiquemall.com](http://6thstreetantiquemall.com), 806-374-0959) housed in a National Register-listed building.

Maintaining the Route 66 theme is **Cadillac Ranch** (10 miles west of downtown Amarillo on the south side of I-40) a permanent art installation of 10

historic Cadillacs buried nose-down in a field. The cars, representing the golden age of American automobiles on the Mother Road, were positioned at the same angle as the pyramids in Egypt and are covered with thick layers of graffiti, which is encouraged.

While in the Amarillo area, visitors should also make a point to visit the **Charles Goodnight Historical Center** ([armstrongcountymuseum.com](http://armstrongcountymuseum.com), 806-944-5591), located 40 miles east of the city. The legendary rancher's "Castle on the Prairie," a charming 1887 home that served as Goodnight's command center for the Panhandle's first cattle ranch, is available for tours. The THC assisted with its 2012 restoration by providing a Texas Preservation Trust Fund grant.

Operated by the Armstrong County Museum, the Goodnight Historical Center is a testament to the influence Charles and his wife Molly had on ranching's regional and national heritage.

"Molly played an integral role in Charles' life and the history of this area. She helped build a community by focusing on education and making sure their home was open to everyone—from cowboys to senators," says Amy Lovell, executive director of the Armstrong County Museum. "She also helped save the last of the southern herd of American Bison. She



Left: Legendary rancher Charles Goodnight slept on this porch, now a featured attraction at his namesake museum. Right: Shamrock's U-Drop Inn is one of the most iconic structures on historic Route 66.

started with two heifers and a bull calf, and the Goodnight Herd grew from there."

Lovell adds that Charles Goodnight had a lifelong connection with famed Quahada Comanche Chief Quanah Parker, beginning with his involvement in the 1860 raid south of Wichita Falls that recaptured Quanah's mother Cynthia Ann. Decades later, he often hosted Quanah at his home, where the two men discussed ranching over supper.

"He had extreme respect for Quanah," Lovell says. "Charles invited him to the ranch to hunt buffalo one last time because he knew his traditional way of life was disappearing."

## Corralling Panhandle Courthouses

Heritage tourists can experience a memorable getaway by taking a few extra days to explore lightly visited historic courthouses and cultural attractions in the eastern part of the Panhandle, which represents just a portion of the THC's 52-county Texas Plains Trail Region.

From Amarillo, head southeast to nearby Clarendon to see the remarkable **Donley County Courthouse** ([co.donley.tx.us](http://co.donley.tx.us), 806-874-3436). Completed in 1891, the striking Romanesque Revival structure immediately draws attention with its tomato-red roof, bold archways, and cylindrical turrets. Adding to the visual interest is the fact that each side of the façade boasts a different design—a rare architectural feature among Texas courthouses.

A tornado damaged the courthouse in the 1930s, resulting in the removal of the third floor and tower. The THCPP assisted with its full reconstruction in 2003. Visitors are encouraged to explore the interior, where they'll find fascinating period details, including an intricately painted vault door, extraordinary woodwork, and vivid green walls.

While in Clarendon, travelers can learn about regional history at the **Saints Roost Museum** ([saintsroostmuseum.com](http://saintsroostmuseum.com), 806-874-2746),

referencing a term cowboys muttered in the late 1800s to describe the bar-less city. During the summer, catch a movie at the classic 1950s **Sandell Drive-In** theater (12 S. Center Dr., 806-874-0685).

From there, head north 30 miles to McLean, home of the **Devil's Rope and Route 66 Museum** ([barbwiremuseum.com](http://barbwiremuseum.com), 806-779-2225, reopens March 1). The museum offers a fascinating glimpse in the rear-view mirror, with







The Gray County Courthouse in Pampa was restored to its original Beaux Arts appearance thanks to the THC's courthouse preservation program.

vintage road signs, hundreds of mementos from the golden age of automobile travel, and artwork from tourist traps (the enormous metal rattlesnake is a highlight). The attached barbed wire, aka “devil’s rope,” portion of the building is similarly intriguing, with thousands of varieties of metal fencing from across the world. While in McLean, be sure to snap a few photos of the classic 1928 cottage-style Phillips 66 station on old Route 66 at the western edge of town.

Just east of McLean is Shamrock, home of perhaps the most impressive Route 66 building in Texas. **The U-Drop Inn and Conoco Station** ([shamrocktx.net](http://shamrocktx.net), 806-256-2516) is a remarkable 1936 Art Deco landmark with a steeple-like spire that advertised food, gas, and lodging—three essential elements for Route 66 travelers. Refurbished to its original glory, the building now houses a visitors information center.

From Shamrock, travelers can head 15 miles north to Wheeler, where another notable courthouse awaits discovery. Constructed in 1925, the Classical Revival **Wheeler County Courthouse** ([co.wheeler.tx](http://co.wheeler.tx), 806-826-5544) offered THC staff in the early 2000s a rare opportunity during the THCPP-assisted restoration.

“Those architects just couldn’t believe it when they saw the pristine shape this building was in,” says Wheeler County Clerk Margaret Forman. “Ours was unique because it didn’t have all the additions and modifications that so many others had over the years. We just had to update the courtroom a bit, take care of some floors and windows, and add a new mechanical system.”

The courtroom is especially impressive, with a restored historic balcony and relocation of an elevator. The original furniture and detailing were refurbished by local contractors.

“When they took the benches out of the district courtroom, they found the name Darby had been written under one of them,” Forman recalls. “Well, Darby is my son, so that brought back a lot of fun memories. He used to play under those seats when I started working here back in the ‘70s. This restoration is a matter of pride to me—I love this old building.”

About 30 miles northwest of Wheeler is Miami, home of the 1913 Classical Revival Roberts County Courthouse, restored through the THCPP and rededicated in 2012. The district courtroom features beautifully restored plaster and stenciled detailing; other architectural highlights include a mosaic-patterned floor, restored marble wainscot, and colorful plaster walls.

While in Miami, learn regional history at the **Roberts County Museum** (806-868-3291), housed in an 1888 railroad depot that was used for nearly a century. The museum features historical photos and artifacts, including an exhibit dedicated to a nearby archeological discovery of five mammoth remains and items associated with the 12,000-year-old Clovis culture.

From Miami, travelers can make a quick 20-minute drive to Pampa, where they’ll find a remarkably restored courthouse and unexpected musical history.

The 1930 Beaux Arts-style **Gray County Courthouse** ([co.gray.tx](http://co.gray.tx), 806-669-8007) represents a period of Panhandle prosperity that coincided with the fashionable City Beautiful movement, resulting in its attractive ornamentation with practical design. Due to its relatively young age, the courthouse had not experienced significant alterations, resulting in a restoration that mainly addressed deteriorated windows and outdated mechanical and electrical systems.



Pampa’s Woody Guthrie Folk Music Center honors the place where the folk legend learned to play guitar.

While in Pampa, be sure to visit the **Woody Guthrie Folk Music Center** ([woodyguthriepampatx.com](http://woodyguthriepampatx.com), 806-664-0824), housed in the former Fisher Drug store where Guthrie learned to play guitar. A THC marker details Guthrie’s formative years in Pampa (1929–35), where he worked as a soda jerk at the drug store, spent countless hours at the local library, and honed his musical skills before heading to California in 1937 during the Dust Bowl. ★

To learn about other significant heritage sites in the area, download a free copy of the THC’s *Texas Plains Trail Region* travel guide at [texasimetravel.com](http://texasimetravel.com).

View more Panhandle photos at [thc.texas.gov/blog](http://thc.texas.gov/blog).

# Squared Away

## New THC Preservation Initiative Offers Best of Courthouse, Main Street Programs

By Emily Koller  
 THC Planner, Town Square Initiative

The Town Square Initiative (TSI), a relatively new Texas Historical Commission (THC) program, is already experiencing results from its efforts to meld beneficial elements from two of the agency’s marquee programs.

The THC’s Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program and Texas Main Street Program assist communities with contributions by local governments and the state. The TSI is uniquely positioned to leverage these investments in Texas communities that have participated in the THC’s courthouse and Main Street programs.

Using the historic preservation-based economic development approach of the Main Street program, the TSI is designed to provide more-specialized services to cities with recently restored courthouses or other major public investments.

“Ideally, this will spur additional redevelopment projects and further invigorate downtowns,” says Brad Patterson, director of the THC’s Community Heritage Development Division, which oversees the program. “We’re hoping communities will take advantage of our agency’s preservation expertise in historic downtown areas. These services can provide an impressive impact on local economies.”

Nearly two years after its inception, the TSI offers an array of advanced revitalization services that address the challenges of turning vacant and underutilized properties into vibrant, economically viable projects. An interdisciplinary team comprised of an architect, planner, and economic development specialist work closely with communities to provide project assistance.

attract investors who value unique historical qualities.

In 2014, Mount Vernon Main Street agreed to participate as a TSI pilot city upon completion of the downtown Franklin County Courthouse restoration project. The TSI team worked with community members to complete a downtown strategy report with a goal of filling vacancies and creating a diverse, sustainable business mix.

“We’re hoping communities will take advantage of our agency’s preservation expertise in historic downtown areas. These services can provide an impressive impact on local economies.”

—Brad Patterson

Director, THC Community Heritage Development Division



The restored Franklin County Courthouse is the center of activity in downtown Mount Vernon.



After a series of open houses, well-attended presentations, conversations with property owners, and a consumer survey, the TSI drafted a highly visual set of recommendations. These suggestions focused on public improvements, a coordinated approach to business recruitment, key policy changes, and a catalyst redevelopment proposal for one of the premier, but as yet vacant, downtown buildings. These efforts, coupled with the active engagement of several new families committed to investing in downtown and along the historic Bankhead

Highway, helped establish the strategy report’s vision.

The momentum created by that process instilled confidence for the new investors and entrepreneurs. Today, five spaces on the square documented as vacant during the planning process are

This expert advice focuses on three primary areas: conceptual design and financial feasibility studies for vacant buildings; coordinated downtown planning strategies to facilitate downtown investment; and market exposure of downtown properties to



Above: Watermelon Mills Coffee Shop is one of Mount Vernon's recent downtown success stories thanks to the Town Square Initiative. Below: Another TSI-assisted rehabilitation project in Mount Vernon is Steve O's Pizza & Pub.

now either occupied with impressive new businesses, or undergoing substantial rehabilitations with grand openings in the works.

Mount Vernon Main Street Manager Carolyn Teague, a longtime resident and business owner, recalled a recent evening downtown, when the courthouse square buzzed with life and activity. Storefronts were lit; diners enjoyed pizza, beer, and music at a new restaurant; friends chatted outside a quaint coffee shop; and kids ran and played in the plaza—all with a backdrop of the recently restored 1912 Franklin County Courthouse.

"If you'd told me it would look like this a year and a half ago, I wouldn't have believed you," she said.

Mount Vernon Main Street members are especially proud of several recent projects that draw residents and visitors downtown and add to the city's vibrancy. Watermelon Mills Coffee Shop is housed in a beautifully restored corner building that reactivates the southeast side of the square, which lost several buildings to fire

years ago. The shop—completed by new Mount Vernon residents Shannon and Greg Ostertag—celebrated its grand opening in September 2016.

The TSI also assisted with the planning of Steve O's Pizza and Pub, a brick oven pizza restaurant in the historic Fleming Building that opened in May 2016. The business provided a much-needed evening gathering spot for drinks, conversation, and entertainment.



The M.L. Edwards Store, located in a historic two-story building on the west side of the square, is also undergoing a complete rehabilitation by the Ostertags. It will reopen later this year with a café, home goods store, first-floor commercial kitchen, and second-floor event space.

In addition, the Mount Vernon Main Street Program is actively working on two other projects identified in the downtown strategy report. These include the pursuit of a National Register Historic District designation to facilitate additional tax credit projects, and a public space design for the historic Smokey Row commercial area.

"We're proud to have introduced the Town Square Initiative to play a part in bringing people together to craft a vision for Mount Vernon's downtown," Patterson said. "We're hoping we can bring this beneficial program to other communities across Texas to help spur preservation-based projects and small-scale, high-quality development." ★



For additional information about the TSI, visit [thc.texas.gov/tsi](http://thc.texas.gov/tsi).

# Preservation Power

## Recently Restored Courthouses Celebrate Dedicated Work at Rededication Ceremonies

By *Andy Rhodes*  
The Medallion *Managing Editor*

When counties are accepted into the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP), their vision of a fully restored building is a driving force for the years of work ahead. That dream continues to serve as motivation while architectural plans are approved, construction takes place, and final touches are made.

This patience is fully rewarded on rededication day. Two Texas counties—Throckmorton and Navarro—recently experienced the fulfillment of reaching their courthouse restoration goals. And both celebrated their historical legacies with memorable rededication ceremonies.

In July 2016, Navarro County rededicated its impressive 1905 Classical Revival-style courthouse on a hot summer afternoon

tempered by a welcoming breeze. More than 200 people gathered in Corsicana to celebrate the magnificently restored building.

The ceremony was emceed by Navarro County Judge H.M. Davenport, and featured federal and state officials who commended the THC's courthouse program for preserving Texas' significant landmarks. The rededication program was followed by an open tour of the courthouse and cookies provided by the local Collin Street Bakery, a THC Texas Treasure Business Award recipient.

Navarro County received a THCPP planning grant in 2010, enabling them to hire the Georgetown firm 1113 Architects to produce construction documents for the project. The THC awarded a subsequent construction grant exceeding \$5 million to complete a full restoration executed by general contractor Phoenix I of Dallas. The county contributed over \$5.5 million as a match, approved through a bond election.



Left: The Navarro County Courthouse was rededicated in July 2016. Above: Throckmorton's County Courthouse was rededicated in March 2015.

Restoration of the Navarro County Courthouse's exterior began with repairs to the glazed terra-cotta cornice, followed by restoration of the clock face and clay roof tile repairs. A significant project was replicating the copper Lady Justice statue, reportedly removed from atop the entry pediment as a donation to the war effort during World War II. Reconstruction of the side balconies and a decorative plaster proscenium arch in the district courtroom provide a dramatic impression for visitors.

About 200 miles to the northwest, the fully restored Throckmorton County Courthouse received similar accolades at its rededication in March 2015. More than 150 people attended the ceremony in Throckmorton, which included a program with state and local officials, a meal on the courthouse lawn, and an evening street dance.

The Italianate-style Throckmorton County Courthouse is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Antiquities

Landmark, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The restoration project returned the interior and exterior to their original 1890 appearance, thanks to a THC grant of nearly \$2.4 million matched with approximately \$400,000 from Throckmorton County and its residents. County officials worked with Komatsu Architecture of Fort Worth, and hired KBL Restoration

as general contractor overseeing 40 subcontractors—from specialists in plaster restoration to The Steeple People, a fabricator of metal cupolas.

The transformation, undertaken over a three-year period, included reconstruction of the cupola and roof and the removal of an exterior addition. Doors, windows, and interior finishes were restored to their original appearances and paint colors. ★

To learn more about these and other THCPP-assisted courthouses, visit [thc.texas.gov/thcpp](http://thc.texas.gov/thcpp).

# Remember San Felipe!

## THC Breaks Ground on New Museum to Honor Pivotal Texas Revolution Site

By Heather McBride  
THC Senior Communications Specialist

On a foggy fall day last October, San Felipe de Austin State Historic site, a Texas Historical Commission (THC) property, held a ceremonial groundbreaking and capital campaign kick-off by announcing plans for a new museum and visitor amenities at the site.

More than 200 supporters and friends heard State Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, State Rep. Leighton Schubert, THC Chairman John L. Nau, III, and THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe speak about the significance of the site and future plans for it. In addition, over 100 fourth-graders from nearby Stephen F. Austin Elementary School were on hand to enjoy programming about the site's history and ongoing archeological investigations.

On that day, the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission launched a \$5.3 million capital campaign for the construction of a state-of-the-art museum at San Felipe de Austin. The state has committed \$5.2 million to this project, and the THC is requesting an additional \$2 million from the state in the biennium, leaving approximately \$5.3 million to be raised from philanthropy.

“San Felipe de Austin, founded in 1823 as the headquarters of Stephen F. Austin’s Colony, played a pivotal role in events leading up to the Texas Revolution,” said John L. Nau, III, THC chairman. “This dramatic story is not nearly as well known

or understood as others in the chronicles of Texas history, including the Alamo and San Jacinto. The new museum will change that by telling the story of this historic site.”

To increase public awareness of the colony’s history and significance, the THC is developing a new museum along with an orientation center, exhibits, map plaza, outdoor interpretation, and education programs focused on the site’s history and archeology.

In 1823, Stephen F. Austin—“the Father of Texas”—secured land grant contracts with the Mexican government to bring families (known as the “Old 300”) to form a colony in southeast Texas. San Felipe de Austin became a major hub for commerce, government, and diplomacy and was the site of the first immigration land office, postal service, and early schools.

When the Alamo fell, Sam Houston’s army

retreated toward San Felipe. Local militia evacuated the residents and burned the town to the ground on March 29, 1836, then defended the river crossing against Santa Anna’s invading army. Weeks later, Texas independence was won at the Battle of San Jacinto. While San Felipe de Austin’s prominence lasted only 13 years (1823–1836), nearly every significant character and event of this era of Texas history is connected to this frontier outpost.

The THC and the Friends of the THC are very appreciative of the leadership of the campaign’s honorary co-chairs, former Gov. Mark White and Sen. Kolkhorst. The campaign committee includes community leaders from Austin County, Houston, Dallas, and Central Texas, as well as Friends board members from across the state.

“I am thrilled with the commitment from this committee, and am confident that with their leadership and guidance we will achieve success in our efforts,” said Lareatha Clay, president of the Friends of the THC. ★

### San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site

For more information about the San Felipe de Austin museum campaign, please contact Anjali Zutshi, executive director of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, at [Anjali.Zutshi@thc.texas.gov](mailto:Anjali.Zutshi@thc.texas.gov), or 512-936-2241. For information about site history or to plan a visit, call 979-885-2181 or go to [visitsanfelipedeAustin.com](http://visitsanfelipedeAustin.com). The site is open daily from 9 a.m.–5 p.m.



More than 100 fourth-graders helped celebrate a ceremonial groundbreaking for San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site’s new museum and visitor amenities.

# Linden and Buda Join THC's Main Street Program

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) recently designated Linden and Buda as 2017 official Texas Main Street cities. The communities officially entered the program January 1, becoming the 88th and 89th designated participants.

"The Texas Main Street Program was one of the first statewide coordinating programs when the national effort was rolled out in 1981," said THC Chairman John L. Nau, III. "Today, Main Street is recognized as a valuable local economic development tool for communities."

The Main Street Program stimulates private sector downtown reinvestment, and helps retain, expand, and recruit businesses, while also creating new jobs in Texas. Participating communities have generated almost \$3.4 billion in overall reinvestment into their historic downtowns, and created more than 35,000 jobs and 8,900 small businesses.

Local Main Street programs receive a wide range of services and technical expertise from the THC, including design and historic preservation, planning, economic development, organizational management, and training. For more information on the Texas Main Street Program, contact State Coordinator Debra Drescher at 512-463-5758 and [debra.drescher@thc.texas.gov](mailto:debra.drescher@thc.texas.gov). ★



The THC recently accepted two communities into its Main Street Program. At left is Linden's Cass County Courthouse. Above is an 1898 building in downtown Buda that will become part of the city's Main Street district.

## CELEBRATE THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHISHOLM TRAIL

The legendary Chisholm Trail will be honored throughout 2017 as part of its 150th anniversary celebration. The THC is participating by producing a special Chisholm Trail mobile tour, available for free download at [texashistoryapp.com](http://texashistoryapp.com).

Visitors traveling the modern-day trail can use the mobile tour to experience what it was like for the rugged cowboys of the cattle-drive era. From the end of the Civil War until the mid-1880s, tens of thousands of cowboys rode trails from Texas to Kansas railyards. These drives laid the foundation for Texas' successful cattle industry, and helped elevate the state out of post-Civil War poverty.

The tour highlights heritage destinations in Texas with stories of iconic trail topics such as drovers, barons, ranchers, chuck wagons, cattle rustlers, and *vaqueros*. To learn about commemorative events throughout the year, see the Chisholm Trail 150th Anniversary Facebook page. To access the video, audio stories, and hundreds of images in the mobile app, visit [www.thc.texas.gov](http://www.thc.texas.gov). ★



## SHARE YOUR OPINIONS ABOUT THE MEDALLION

Do you enjoy the articles featured in *The Medallion*? Do you have any suggestions for new ideas in the magazine? Please share your feedback with us via an online survey. To participate, go to [thc.texas.gov/msurvey](http://thc.texas.gov/msurvey). ★

# Organizational Sustainability

## CHC Research Reveals Importance of Revitalizing Partnerships

By Amy Hammons  
County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

County Historical Commission (CHC) Outreach Program staff member Candice McClendon spent several months researching why some CHCs thrive while others struggle from year to year. Expecting that answers would be tied to recruitment and retention, she spoke with CHC chairs across the state about effective methods for engaging appointees.

Instead, McClendon discovered the differences between healthy and strained CHCs has less to do with appointees and more with organizational diversity. Her research shows that the key to CHC success is understanding how to partner effectively with a wide variety of organizations.

High-performing CHCs foster partnerships that open doors to bigger and better opportunities within their shared communities. Maintaining ongoing give-and-take between partners sustains an organization from year to year despite economic and population variability.

Many CHC members may be thinking, “We partner all the time—that’s not a problem for us.” However, they may have to look more closely at these following questions: Who is helping plan events? Who provides the manpower?



Preservation partners rally in Austin to save Texas history.

**High-performing CHCs foster partnerships that open doors to bigger and better opportunities within their shared communities.**

Who is your guaranteed audience? Most CHCs use appointees to satisfy each of these needs.

The average CHC may check the partnership boxes on annual reports, but its project descriptions often reveal a one-man show, or in this case, one-organization show. Many CHCs partner with other history-related organizations, and these partner memberships

are made up of CHC appointees. This type of partnering doesn’t diversify your activities nor does it expand your audience.

In contrast, there are some CHCs that report project descriptions which list a wide variety of partner organizations that enhance activities by supplying what the CHC cannot accomplish on its own. In return, the CHC provides that missing ingredient to its partners’ events.

CHC Outreach’s priority for 2017 is to explore what healthy partnerships look like and how to cultivate a diverse partnership network.

The first steps of our journey and the path we plan to take are described here: [thc.texas.gov/expanding-chc-partnerships](http://thc.texas.gov/expanding-chc-partnerships). ★

*The Medallion* is published quarterly by the Texas Historical Commission. Address correspondence to: Managing Editor, *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276. Portions of the newsletter that are not copyrighted or reprinted from other sources may be reprinted with permission. Contributions for the support of this publication are gratefully accepted. For information about alternate formats of this publication, contact the THC at 512-463-6255.

*The Medallion* is financed in part by a grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. All of the agency’s public programs and activities are operated free from discrimination on

the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against should write to Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

*The Medallion* is available online at [thc.texas.gov/medallion](http://thc.texas.gov/medallion). If you would prefer to receive *The Medallion* electronically instead of through the mail, please send your name and address to [thc@thc.texas.gov](mailto:thc@thc.texas.gov). You will be notified by email when each new issue is available on the THC website and will no longer receive a printed copy.

### Our Mission

To protect and preserve the state’s historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.



**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*

P.O. Box 12276 • Austin, TX 78711-2276  
512-463-6100 • thc@thc.texas.gov  
thc.texas.gov

*The Medallion*  
Texas Historical Commission  
P.O. Box 12276  
Austin, TX 78711-2276

PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTIN, TX  
PERMIT NO. 1938

## WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

**Know your Texas history?** Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to [medallion@thc.texas.gov](mailto:medallion@thc.texas.gov). Limit one prize annually per contestant.

**Need a clue?** This courthouse in the Texas Independence Trail Region was struck by a 1909 hurricane that destroyed the original clock tower and part of the roof.



**Answer to the photo from the last issue:** The photo at left is Wichita Falls' "Big Blue," the former First Wichita National Bank building dating to 1919. The iconic downtown structure is undergoing upper-floor renovations, and now hosts the Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame on its first floor. Congratulations and prizes go to the first three readers who correctly identified the site: Douglas James of Wichita

Falls, Michael Uriniak of Wichita Falls, and Michael Smith, City of Wichita Falls Councilor at Large. Thanks to all who participated! ★

